

Get Your Picky Eater to Try Something New

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of *The No-Cry Picky Eater Solution*

Is your child unwilling to taste a new food? *A picky eater often has to be exposed to something new as many as ten to fifteen times before even tasting it! Children trust familiar things in their lives and are often suspicious of something new and different—this applies to food too. A food that has an unusual appearance, color, smell, or texture can be off-putting to a young child. That's why repeated exposure helps. Eventually the unusual food becomes familiar, and at that point, the child becomes open to the idea of tasting it and giving it a fair evaluation. Knowing these facts gives us insight into how to introduce new foods and what to expect when we do.*

Here are a few tips:

- Begin by putting a tiny bit of the new food—such as two chick-peas or one Brussels sprout—on your child's plate along with regular favorites. Don't expect him to eat it, and don't make a comment if he pulls it apart, smells it, or smashes it. Allow the experimentation to occur—it's the first step to acceptance. If you've displayed the new food on your child's plate eight to ten times and he still hasn't eaten any, then gently encourage him to take "just one bite."
- Pick one or two new foods at a time and put one on your child's plate three or four times per week for several months. When he sees it enough times he'll eventually give it a taste.
- Let your child observe you eating the new food. Mention to your spouse or a friend that you enjoy the food so that your child hears your comment. Studies tell us that when children are certain their parents or other important people in their lives really like a food (not just eat it out of duty, but actually enjoy it) they decide it's a good thing to try for themselves.

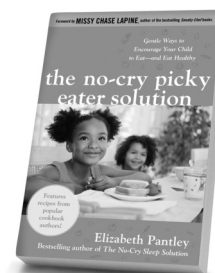
Melissa, mother of five-year-old Brenna, four-year-old Gianni, two-year-old Giulio, and nine-month-old Brydie shares her idea:

"To introduce my kids to some new foods, I create a food treasure hunt. I have the kids play in their room so I can put out the food and make a map to each place with clues to the next food spot. They don't get the next clue unless they try the food at each spot. I try to have only two new or not-so-keen-on foods along with about three things they do like along the way. The treasure at the end is dessert!"

- If you are eating with another adult, offer that person a taste of the new food. Ask her in advance to try it willingly and declare it tasty. When a child sees someone else being adventurous, he may be more willing to do so himself.
- After your child has tried the food and found it at least minimally acceptable (meaning he doesn't spit it out or gag on it!), try putting it out as an appetizer before dinner is served. If your child is hungry, and it's the first thing offered, he may actually eat a bite or two.

Catherine, mother to eight-year-old Ben and four-year-old Birdy tells her tale:

"I put kale on his plate and put kale on his plate. My son tried it and grimaced, and we praised him for trying it. Pages flew off the calendar, and his beard grew down to the floor, and then one day he ate it without comment. And then one day he ate it and said, 'This is actually not as bad as I thought.' After which a pair of bluebirds draped the banner of joy around my shoulders!"



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*This article is an excerpt from **The No-Cry Picky Eater Solution** by Elizabeth Pantley. (McGraw-Hill, 2011)*